



# Montgomery County Council

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From the Office of Councilmember Valerie Ervin February 7, 2013

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## **SNAP the Silence of Poverty Challenge to Conclude With Event on Friday, Feb. 8**

*Councilmember Ervin, Impact Silver Spring and A Wider Circle Will Host Community Engagement Event to Develop Action Plan to Combat Poverty in Montgomery County*

ROCKVILLE, Md., February 7, 2013—Residents, non-profit providers, community activists and elected leaders will conclude their work-week living on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) \$5 per day food budget with a community engagement event from 6-8 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building on Friday, Feb. 8. Hundreds of people across the nation this week participated in the SNAP the Silence of Poverty Challenge, which was organized by Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin.

Many of the Challenge participants will gather Friday evening at the Civic Building, which is located at One Veterans' Plaza in downtown Silver Spring.

SNAP Challenge participants are asked to bring the dinner meals that they have planned for Friday evening. Soup will be provided by Interfaith Works for those who have run out of food. The gathering will provide participants with the opportunity to share how their lives were impacted by living on no more than \$5 per day for their nutritional needs.

Friday's event also will allow participants to brainstorm ideas and make recommendations on additional actions that can be taken to help reduce poverty in Montgomery County.

Councilmember Ervin is well known for her initiatives that focus on improving the lives of working families. She secured dramatic budget increases for preschool and

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child care subsidies and expanded access and funding for the summer food and universal breakfast programs. In addition, she is a strong proponent for the Working Families Income Supplement. As a result of her advocacy, the Council added an additional \$600,000 to the program in Fiscal Year 2012 and an additional \$1.2 million in Fiscal Year 2013. She also was the lead sponsor of the County's Prevailing Wage and Displaced Service Worker laws.

While the SNAP the Silence Challenge is in no way comparable to the struggles encountered by low-income working families, it has provided a new perspective and greater understanding for many of those who have taken the challenge.

"I am looking forward to sharing my experience and hearing everyone's personal stories on Friday evening, but this is just the beginning," said Councilmember Ervin. "The goal is to turn this heightened awareness about poverty in Montgomery County into action for our neediest residents. The non-profit and faith-based partners, who focus on issues of poverty in Montgomery County, do amazing work on behalf of our residents. I thank them for the work they do every day to ease the burdens faced by so many. This challenge has demonstrated to all of us that we have more work to do."

The Friday night conversation will focus on next steps to develop ways to enhance volunteer efforts and existing programs.

"Most importantly, the discussion will address how to use the momentum to push for new policies and funding that will end hunger, provide job opportunities that pay a living wage, promote affordable housing, access to health care and transit options for all residents of Montgomery County," said Councilmember Ervin.

In October 2012, approximately 65,200 County residents participated in the SNAP program. From July through October 2012, an average of 2,400 households applied for SNAP benefits each month. For families that qualify for the SNAP program, the average daily benefit per person, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Program (USDA/FNS) statistics, is \$4.28.

"I believe that this week's action, especially amongst the public leaders in our community, has perhaps incited the movement to eradicate poverty from the face of our county—and I am glad that we at IMPACT Silver Spring can be a part of it," said Ronnie Galvin, the director of IMPACT Silver Spring.

It's not too late to get involved in this effort. Participants have been sharing their experiences all week on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/snapthesilence](http://www.facebook.com/snapthesilence) and on Twitter at [#SNAPtheSilence@ValerieErvin](https://twitter.com/SNAPtheSilence@ValerieErvin). After the challenge concludes, these sites will provide updates about poverty issues in our community and provide information about staying involved with the SNAP the Silence movement.

"In 1966, Sargent Shriver, who was President Johnson's Director of the War on Poverty said, 'Most wars are declared by old men, but fought by the young. But our war on poverty asks everyone to get into the fight,'" Councilmember Ervin said. "We are fighting our own war on poverty right here in Montgomery County."

Mark Bergel, the founder and executive director of A Wider Circle, said: "This is a great week of prioritizing the needs of our neighbors, and to be sure, it is what we all

do on February 9 and going forward that counts. In this County, at this time, so much is possible. The SNAP Challenge lays the groundwork for us to take important and necessary strides in ending the poverty that holds our neighbors down."

Those in need of assistance in a variety of ways can contact the Montgomery Department of Health and Human Services by calling the County information and referral line at 240-777-0311. More information on income support programs can be found at:

<http://www6.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/cyf/CYF/IS.asp>

Resources describing how to extend a food budget can be found at:

- [http://www.harvesters.org/\\_FileLibrary/FileImage/FoodStampChallengeRecipes.pdf](http://www.harvesters.org/_FileLibrary/FileImage/FoodStampChallengeRecipes.pdf)
- <http://www.foodstamped.com/learn-up/recipes>
- <http://fightingpovertywithfaith.com/f2/food-stamp-challenge/category/nutritious-recipes/>
- <http://www.delish.com/food/recalls-reviews/one-in-seven-americans-on-food-stamps-stretch-your-dollar-at-the-grocery>

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